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S E C R E T AMMAN 009505

SIPDIS

NOFORN

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SUBJECT: SHIELD S53-05: JORDAN WILL BLOCK SALE OF
CROP-DUSTING AIRCRAFT TO SYRIA

REF: STATE 219520

Classified By: Ambassador David Hale, Reasons 1.4 (B) & (D)

1. (S/NF) On December 7 Ambassador delivered to Haytham Mufti, the King's private office advisor on such matters, reftel demarche on the reported offer by Seabird Aviation Jordan LLC of crop dusting aircraft and equipment to a Syrian firm. The King Abdullah Design and Development Bureau (KADD-B) owns Seabird. Initially unaware of the contacts between Seabird and the Syrians, Mufti informed Ambassador several hours later that Seabird in fact had made an offer, but the Syrian firm opted to award the contract to a Chinese firm. However, the Chinese firm declined, citing U.S. restrictions on transfers to Syria. A few days ago, the Syrians again approached Seabird, and discussions of an offer were resumed. In response to our demarche, Mufti has instructed Seabird in writing to cease all discussions with the Syrians and to provide assurances that no aircraft would be transferred.

2. (S/NF) Comment: As King Abdullah accelerates development of a local arms industry through KADD-B, we are likely to face additional conflicts between potential Jordanian sales and U.S. export restrictions. Recognizing the need to avoid even inadvertent violations, Mufti is setting up a tighter export licensing regime for Jordan. In the months ahead, it would be extremely helpful to have a senior official responsible for our non-proliferation policies visit Jordan and brief the King's top advisors on our policy and legal considerations.

HALE